

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

OFFICE OF THE
BOARD OF GAME COMMISSIONERS
HARRISBURG, PA.

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PHEASANT RAISING
SUGGESTIONS

BULLETIN NO. 4

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PHEASANT RAISING.

Because of our inability to secure quail as we hoped to do, through which the State could be restocked with old-time game birds, we are compelled at this time to turn to the next best proposition offering itself, viz., the introduction of game-birds from across the water, preferably Ring-neck pheasants, or better still Chinese pheasants.

From data collected from many directions during a series of years, we are satisfied that because of our severe winters with deep snows, neither the Ring-neck pheasant nor the Chinese pheasant, because they are strictly ground feeders, are likely to become a part of the fauna of this State; that is, we do not believe the birds can survive our winters and increase from the stock wintered over, as game-birds should increase, in numbers sufficient to satisfy sportsmen. Still, we are disposed to try the experiment of releasing Ring-neck pheasants or Chinese pheasants, as we may be able to procure them, in the hope of not only increasing our game, but also in bringing that game as near the home of the sportsman as possible. In many sections of our State our ruffed grouse are gone and our quail are rapidly going. Our idea is that if we annually produce game, to take the place of the departed grouse or quail, in quantity, at a reasonable price, even though that game may all be killed the first year, we will have supplied some sport and recreation to those who are contributing the funds for this purpose, and can, if need be, repeat the operation year after year. With that thought in mind, we propose to release in the Commonwealth this Spring, and each succeeding Spring for a period, in sections where there are no grouse and but few if any quail, a certain number of either mature Ring-neck pheasants or Chinese pheasants, or both, that we hope and expect will nest and raise young in reasonable numbers, *to be shot by sportsmen the same Fall*, and in addition, for experimental purposes, we propose to send out to sportsmen a limited number of clutches of pheasant eggs, that may be placed under ordinary hens to be hatched and be raised to maturity to join with the other birds, *to be shot the next Fall after hatching*. If these hens hatch well and raise their young to maturity, we will have secured a number of birds in this way for what one mature bird would cost us in the market.

We are satisfied from extended investigations that the rearing of these birds in captivity is not as easy as some may suppose it to be, and to aid as much as possible in this undertaking offer the following suggestions:

We believe that the same methods through which turkeys can be raised successfully, if followed, will result in the rearing of pheasants, and the first and most important step in this direction after the birds are hatched is to keep them dry and warm, and your hen after hatching should be closely confined in a coop every day, all the time, until your young pheasants are fully two weeks old. When the pheasant eggs are received they should be at once put in a cool place such as an ordinary cellar until your are ready to place them under the hen. The sooner they are set the better.

SETTING COOP.

The setting hen's nest should be placed so as to secure a proper circulation of fresh air and to best facilitate the handling of the hen. *The nest should be made upon well-drained ground.* It is a good method to build a crater-shaped mound of earth which will raise the nest several inches above the surrounding ground, a piece of sod or turf two feet square will help in this construction, and in the hollow of this mound a rude nest can easily be made and lined with fine hay, using care that this nest is of sufficient size and as flat as possible in the bottom. There should be no difficulty in forming a rough setting coop. Any ordinary box without a bottom and a hole in the top of the box, this hole covered by a loose board, or a trap door, can be used for this purpose and a small covered runway should be attached to this box so as to permit the hen to leave the nest occasionally and at the same time prevent her from straying. This runway can be constructed of slats, wire netting or anything handy which your judgment will tell you is suitable.

If the hen is set in the ordinary open box and at liberty to go or come as she chooses, she is sometimes apt to stay off the nest so long in search of food as to allow the eggs to cool too much, or she is apt not to leave the eggs for days, so that they do not receive the proper ventilation and do not hatch well.

Place the hen on the nest with a couple of common hen's eggs under her, and allow her to remain a day or two in order to accustom her to the nest and to see if she will be contented to remain in it.

At least once every other day the hen should be removed from her nest and the eggs should be carefully rolled round so that each egg will have changed its position. This can be done easily through the hole in the top of the box. Some hens turn the eggs more or less themselves when settling back upon the nest, but not always, and, if this is not done, the embryo is liable to become attached to the shell so that the young chick will die before it can successfully emerge.

If, during the operation of rolling the eggs, it is noticed that the nest has become packed down hard and is not of good shape, you should remove the eggs to one side and reform it. When this is done and the nest is again in shape, the eggs should once more be carefully placed and the hen allowed to go back without delay.

Another point which should be attended to (and this is, in fact, of *very great importance*) is the dusting of the hen at least three times during the setting period, with some good lice powder. Most hens are lousy, and it is of course necessary to get rid of the lice before the young birds are hatched. If this is not done, the lice will crawl from the hen onto the young birds and breed in such quantities as to destroy the pheasant chick within a very few days.

Feed the setting hen only what she will pick up clean, and feed very sparingly. She must be provided also with fresh water and grit throughout the setting period.

When the pheasants are about twenty-four hours old, remove the setting hen and the young birds to the ground on which you intend to rear them.

Any kind of a hen that is a good setter can be used. A larger number of eggs can be cared for by a large hen than can be handled by a small hen, but the large hen is liable, if clumsy, to break more eggs than a small hen would break. You are to use judgment in this matter. Not to exceed eighteen eggs should be placed under the largest hen. These eggs will hatch in about twenty-three days and your hen should be disturbed as little as possible during the last two days of this period. The young birds will be able to run about as soon as hatched and may get lost. It is, therefore, necessary to carefully guard the birds, and for two or three days after the pheasants are hatched the coop should be kept closed so that the young birds will be compelled to stay with the hen and learn to come at her call. After this a little freedom can be allowed the birds.

FEEDING.

The birds need not be fed at all during the first twenty-four (24) hours after they are hatched, then a little hard-boiled egg cut fine or grated, with a light sprinkling of black pepper and a little fine grit, such as white glass sand can be given for three or four days, after this Pratt's Baby Chick Foods, fed dry, can be given, and later on scratch foods and grain. Grit acts as teeth for the birds and both grit and charcoal should be provided from the beginning. Baby birds can no more live on the food usually supplied full-grown birds, than babies of the human family can thrive upon the foods adapted to the adult of that family, and your success or failure in this effort will largely depend upon the food supplied the young

birds. If the Pratt food is mixed wet, only enough for one feeding should be prepared at one time, otherwise it will sour and kill your chicks.

BROODING COOP.

The coop in which the hen and her brood are confined need not be over three feet square, and should be tightly closed on all sides excepting the front; it should be floored and should have a tight rain-proof roof, the boards extending over the front and back of the coop for at least six inches and over each side, three inches. On the front about six inches from the floor line, a strip one inch thick by two inches wide should be fastened and the space between this strip and the roof line, should be covered by strong quarter-inch mesh wire netting, in this way opening the coop to light and air and sunshine. The space between the lower line of the wire, as fastened to the strip and the floor line, should be closed by a vertically sliding board extending across the entire front of the coop. that can be raised three or four inches as necessity requires, so that the chicks can come and go at pleasure during daylight, when raised, this board should be fastened to the wire above by a hook, and not by a prop under the board, and be lowered at night to shut out vermin and drafts. A piece of old carpet or sacking tacked along the roof line across the front, can, in the form of a curtain, be turned down over the wire to shut out cold or storm. The floor can well be cleaned by scraping through this opening between the floor and the wire, or a false bottom made of light boards or of linoleum can be used on the floor, to be drawn out for cleaning purposes. The water and food pans placed outside the coop so that the floor will be kept dry, can be readily reached by the hen through the space before mentioned. It is imperative that you look after your birds morning and night, to see that they are regularly fed and that they always have a generous supply of clean fresh water during daylight, and that the coop is securely closed at night, otherwise when you least expect it a storm may come, or a weasel, or a rat, or some other night prowler gain entrance to your coop and destroy your entire lot of birds. Keep a loaded gun handy for use on weasels, or cats, or dogs, or hawks. An ordinary jumper steel trap, set without bait on the top of a post about ten feet high, planted a short distance from your coop will frequently stop the hawk that comes when you are not looking. Be sure to fasten the trap chain to the post, or to a clog, otherwise the hawk may fly off with the trap.

Your coop should be placed where it will get all the sunshine possible, and should always be on well-drained ground. It should have connected with it a small enclosure made either of boards or of close mesh wire, say about ten or twelve feet square and about twenty

inches high, in which the birds may be confined until they are able to jump, or fly, over the fence; when the young pheasants attain this power, the fence and the coop should be removed and the hen and birds be given free range. The young birds should be closely confined during cold rains.

Road dust or ashes should be supplied near the coop with a little Pratt's insect powder added, so that the birds can dust and keep themselves free from lice. After the birds are a week or ten days old, a little green food such as lettuce, or cabbage, or sprouted oats, will be appreciated.

Keep your setting hen and your pheasants as far as possible from your stock of young chickens, in this way avoiding the possibility of trouble from diseases peculiar to young chickens. Be sure to place your pheasants on ground that has never been used by chickens or pheasants; an ounce of prevention is frequently worth many pounds of cure.

These birds are to be raised for shooting purposes and the sooner they are released to range at will after they have reached an age when they can care for themselves, the better it will be for all concerned.

This experiment of having the eggs of the pheasant hatched under the control of others than experts has been tried in many and various directions throughout the United States and numerous failures have been reported, many of them, as we believe, because the proper food or the proper care, or the two combined, have not been given the young birds. In our opinion, the success or failure of your undertaking in this direction will depend to a great extent upon the interest you may personally take in the care of the birds, and as a matter of information to this office as well as to the general public regarding the possibilities of this experiment in Pennsylvania, we ask that later on when the birds are say three weeks old, and again when the birds are fully grown, you write us the result of your effort, giving us the number of birds hatched and the number raised to maturity, with the reasons, in your opinion, for success or failure.

TRAPPING OF PHEASANTS.

When winter comes with its snow and ice, the great majority of these birds that have escaped the guns will surely starve or fall victim to vermin unless they are artificially cared for and fed. We know that feeding birds in a wild state has its drawbacks, and recommend that for the purpose of saving these birds, you trap as many as possible, keeping them in captivity, in covered pens, just as you would keep chickens, and to secure the better protection of these birds we will gladly issue permits to responsible persons to trap

and care for the birds as above suggested. All birds so taken and kept over must be released as soon as the weather will permit in the Spring upon lands either closed to all hunting, or open to all hunting. All birds hatched from eggs supplied by the Game Commission must be released in the same way, as both birds and eggs have been purchased from moneys supplied by sportsmen through the Resident Hunter's License Act, and cannot be placed to the benefit of individuals or special purposes.

Respectfully yours,

JOSEPH KALBFUS,

Secretary, Game Commission.